

# A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF UNIT COHESION IN VIETNAM

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## ABSTRACT

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF UNIT COHESION IN VIETNAM, by Major Damasio Davila, 69 pages.

A historical review of the United States' policies from the Roosevelt to Nixon Administration that led to military involvement in Vietnam. Reviews the military policies instituted by the Army and MACV that were designed to encourage morale, continuity, and staying power. Provides a comparative analysis of the effects of unit cohesion and combat effectiveness from an initial unit deployment in 1966 to 1970 of the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile).

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## ACRONYMS

ARFORGEN	Army Force Generation
CTZ	Corps Tactical Zone (usually preceded by a roman numeral I-IV indicating the zone)
DEROs	Date Expected Return from Overseas
KIA	Killed In Action
MACV	Military Assistance Command Vietnam
MIA	Missing in Action
ORLL	Operational Report-Lessons Learned
WIA	Wounded In Action

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

A quarter-century after the fall of Saigon, the long, divisive struggle in Indochina still lingers in the American fabric.

— H. D. S. Greenway, *The Boston Globe*

In what manner might unit cohesion and combat effectiveness been enhanced through a process of unit deployments instead of individual rotations? If you want to understand society's view on a particular topic, look to its social media. A Vietnam Veteran, Mr. Hugh Greenway, has been a journalist for over 50 years. His quote suggests, and rightly so, the Vietnam conflict continues to divide the American people. Did we win, or did we lose? In the words of President John F. Kennedy, with regards to Vietnam, "how do we know if we are winning?" The world's media also played into this controversial question by airing such things as war crimes cases, and the battles of Million Dollar Mountain and Hamburger Hill.

Television graphically portrayed the Vietnam War in the homes of the American public. They could see what war was "really" like. The Vietnam War was the first to actually receive such news coverage and broadcasts that clearly, had a marked influence on the American population as whole.<sup>1</sup> There are two images that did a great deal to turn US opinion against American involvement in Vietnam. The first was the summary execution of a suspected Viet Cong agent by the South Vietnamese police chief on the streets of Saigon in 1968. The second was a photo of children running away from their village having been burned by napalm.<sup>2</sup> The former picture was taken by Associated Photographer Eddie Adams on 1 February 1968, who was filming footage of a street

shoot-out in the Cholon-Chinese section of Saigon. When the police and army stormed the Viet Cong positions, General Nguyen Ngoc Loan drew his pistol and executed a “known” Viet Cong officer. Gen Loan was within his rights to carry out the summary execution since Saigon was under martial law. The latter photo was taken by Associated Photographer Nick Ut on 8 June 1972, following the accidental bombing of Trang Bang village by the South Vietnam's Air Force.

Countless images such as those described above flashed before the American public on television and in newspapers. Taken out of context, investigative exposés and press coverage unfairly transferred the responsibility of the Vietnam War from the civil sector of the United States Government to the United States military. Fueled by societal reforms, the draft, and organizations like Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW), the anti-war movement further divided the country and severely strained civil-military ties.

To this day, America is still divided on the issue of “winning” the war in Vietnam. One only needs to turn to cinema to see the divide and portrayal of the Vietnam conflict. Movies like, *Platoon*, *Apocalypse Now*, *Full Metal Jacket*, *Casualties of War*, and *Hamburger Hill* perpetuate the belief that Vietnam was fought by a gang of unruly youth set on survival and individualism. When movies like *Distant Thunder*, *Dead Presidents*, and *The Deer Hunter* display the challenges veterans have re-integrating into society. There were a number of firsts in Vietnam, and this undoubtedly created some unique challenges as the paradigm of conventional fighting was stressed and evolved over time. Technology definitely played a role in transforming the battlefield by

providing soldiers with greater mobility; the Vietnam soldier saw more combat engagements in a single year than a World War II Soldier did in four years.<sup>3</sup>

Our recent involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan has reignited the cinders of a once divided country. The contemporary operations and strategy in Southwest Asia are likened to those conducted over 40 years ago in Southeast Asia from the President of the United States to weekly satirical cartoon.<sup>4</sup> While there are similarities, there are just as many differences. The United States Army deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom in brigade sized elements. As units suffered casualties, individual replacements were brought forward to fill the ranks. The Army was designed to conduct two small wars simultaneously and did so successfully by increasing its ranks through recruitment and mobilizing the United States Army Reserve and National Guard forces. As the U.S. Army adopts a strategy of Regionally Aligned Forces (RAF), Geographic Combatant Commanders (GCC's) will have committed brigade support with personnel transitioning in and out on the Army's personnel rotational system. While the process of maintaining this support has not yet been developed, mission success hinges on having the right personnel, with the right skill sets, at the right time and place. This may indicate potential issues to keep soldiers in RAF units longer with compounded deployments every other year to ensure mission success.<sup>5</sup> There are some comparisons to be drawn with this system and the individual replacement techniques utilized during the Vietnam conflict; a system that has been attributed to adversely affecting organizational stability and cohesion.

“However, the purpose of this research is not to determine winners or losers, nor compare Vietnam with Iraq and Afghanistan. Rather, this study aims at understanding in

what ways organizational stability and combat effectiveness may have been enhanced by a process of unit deployment and replacement vice individual replacement. Specifically, in what manner was unit cohesion affected by a constant flux of personnel at the soldier and leader levels.”

Any evaluation of historical ideology would be remiss without an investigation or elaboration of the contemporary context of which it is placed. To better understand how unit cohesion influenced combat effectiveness, chapter 1 looks to the reciprocal relationships between the contemporary “political environment, societal reforms,” and the “military decisions” during the Vietnam era. A close examination of this Clausewitzian Trinity will reveal how the United States government and military enacted policies, primarily the draft and 1-year tour of duty, to project and sustain military forces. This chapter also elucidates the military’s policies regarding personnel replacement and rotation. Chapter 2 is a review of literature to discuss scholarly works concerning the subject of military cohesion. It also reviews historical reports, in the form of operational lessons learned, and after action reviews. In chapter 3, cohesion and its subsets are defined. In this chapter, we will also conduct a case study of the 1st Cavalry Division; a unit that initially deployed together during the early years of Vietnam and stayed through 1971. A comparison of three unit Operations Report-Lessons Learned (ORLLs) from three distinctive periods will provide data with regards to measuring the combat effectiveness and cohesion of a unit deployment vice a unit comprised of personnel on an individual rotation. Chapter 4 is an analysis of the findings concerning the data and narratives of the ORLLs. In this chapter, we will determine the ways organizational stability and combat effectiveness may have been enhanced chapter 5 is a conclusion of

the main points of the thesis and provides recommendations to the Army for consideration.

To the uniformed eye, history seems to have judged the Vietnam War as an American defeat. How will history judge the military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, especially since the 5 January 2014, fall of Fallujah, Iraq? If the next war must “linger in the American fabric,” as Mr. Greenway puts it, then perhaps the research conducted here will ensure it does so in an auspicious manner.

### American Involvement in Vietnam

The United States’ involvement in Vietnam occurred long before the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. The Roosevelt Administration disapproved of post-war (World War II) re-colonization, especially the French efforts in Indochina that included Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. He offered responsibility of Indochina to Chiang Kai-shek, the Chinese nationalist leader and ally, who declined the offer. Though President Roosevelt waived on the issue of Vietnamese independence, in actuality he was “too concerned with bigger matters during World War II to concentrate on remote Indochina.”<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, Roosevelt died before a definitive policy on post-war Indochina could be defined.

The Truman Administration sought to contain Communism from encroaching into Eastern Europe and Asia. The scale at which the United States would have to confront this threat warranted a departure from Roosevelt’s views. The spread of Communism into Eastern Europe, fall of China, and the Korean conflict triggered a unified effort against Communism. The creation of the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) in Vietnam was created as a result of Truman Doctrine.

The Eisenhower Administration disagreed with the 1954 Geneva Accord on the premise that a communist regime, especially one so close, would unequivocally interfere with the political process, and result in a communist government; this became known as the Domino Theory. The United States replaced the French and embarked on an experiment of nation-building. Eisenhower's efforts reflected a belief that through the proper training and support, the South Vietnamese Army would be able to defend South Vietnam without the need for US combat troops.

Seeing South Vietnam as a no-fail mission, the Kennedy Administration placed the responsibility for the management of Vietnam on the cabinet rather than with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and in doing so minimized invaluable military advice. Kennedy's precedent for doing this may be attributed to the failure of ousting Fidel Castro, the increasing tensions in Berlin, and the inter-service rivalry. The Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) was created to supervise the infusion of US forces and military equipment into Vietnam. Initial combat forces deployed to Vietnam were comprised of mainly Army aviation units to enable the mobility of the South Vietnamese military. By 1963, Kennedy had overseen the assignment of approximately 16,000 "advisers" to South Vietnam.

President Lyndon B. Johnson inherited the Oval Office upon the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, and sought to win the 1964 election by marginalizing the future role of the United States in Vietnam. However, the alleged attack on the *USS Maddox* by North Vietnamese patrol boats in the Gulf of Tonkin marked the Americanization of the Vietnam War. Johnson expanded the ground war and waged a bombing campaign into North Vietnam in hopes of disrupting logistical support to the

Viet Cong. By finally committing ground forces to Vietnam, Johnson hoped to demonstrate US resolve, inspire the South Vietnamese and help reverse the damage the insurgency had caused. By the end of 1965, 200,000 US troops had arrived in Vietnam, though their exact role was uncertain.

President Richard Milhous Nixon campaigned on an anti-war campaign, promising to “end the war and win the peace.”<sup>7</sup> His initial strategy included a theory of linkage; leveraging the political ties of Communist countries, namely the USSR and China, to influence North Vietnam, and deterrence; a strategy used in Korea that threatened the use of atomic weapons or in the case of Vietnam, continued military action. Like Johnson, Nixon expanded the war effort. The disjointed message and actions from the Nixon Administration further divided the American people and to some degree the military. Vietnamization, the transfer of authority to South Vietnam, was an effort to fortify the ARVN with the tools necessary to protect the South Vietnamese government. However, the process was disjointed with the tactical situation.

#### United States Army Policy in Vietnam

Contingency planning (USARPAC OPLAN 37-64) assumed that the Army Reserve or National Guard forces would be activated and mobilized in support of the war effort in Vietnam. A politically sensitive subject, the decision against mobilization of these forces challenged the Army’s personnel management and resulted in unique policies. The Army relied on drawing down strategic forces from Korea and Europe to initially fill military occupation specialty (MOS) shortages. However, even this practice could not fill every shortage and eventually larger draft calls were required. The “fixed” Army had other challenges too; replacing experience with availability. Without a pool of



readily available leadership replacements, that the activation of the reserve forces would have provided, the Army was forced to promote junior Soldiers earlier, resulting in what has been referred to as a, “shake-and-bake” promotion. The same was true of officers who were professionally trained but lacked experience and the years of maturity that came with time in service.

The 12-month tour length for Soldiers deployed to Vietnam was recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1962.<sup>8</sup> A proposal to extend tour lengths to 15 months indicated an “increase in unit effectiveness,” but was rejected on the basis that it would decrease replacement needs, place a greater reliance on the draft system, expose Soldiers to additional environmental health concerns, and decrease morale.<sup>9</sup> The 12-month tour was generally accepted by the services and the Secretary of Defense as the most sustainable means of providing forces without interfering with other strategic requirements (providing forces to Europe, and Korea).

Other policies that existed during the Vietnam War included the 6-month officer rotation, and personnel reassignments known as infusion. Officers (brigade to platoon) spent 6 months in combat leadership roles before moving to a staff assignment or vice-versa. This policy was designed to professionally develop the officers by providing them with a depth of knowledge in both combat and staff roles, thus overall enhancing the experience and professionalism of the officer corps. Infusion was a similar concept, but applied to the Non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and Soldiers with “experience”. As units suffered casualties, NCOs and Soldiers from similar units would be transferred over to replace the loss of personnel and experience. The idea was to ensure a degree of

knowledge and experiences were present across the formation so that no single unit would be inundated with just-arrived and inexperienced replacements.

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<sup>1</sup>Daniel C. Hallin, *The Uncensored War: The Media and Vietnam* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1989).

<sup>2</sup>History Learning Site, “Protests Against the Vietnam War,” [historylearningsite.co.uk/protests\\_vietnam\\_war.htm](http://historylearningsite.co.uk/protests_vietnam_war.htm) (accessed 10 March 2014).

<sup>3</sup>Vietnam Flight Crew Network, “Statistics about the Vietnam War,” <http://www.vhfcn.org/stat.html> (accessed 10 March 2014).

<sup>4</sup>Michael A. Fletcher, “Bush Compares Iraq to Vietnam,” *Washington Post*, 23 August 2007, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2007/08/22/AR2007082200323.html> (accessed 28 April 2014).

<sup>5</sup>Steve Griffin, “Regionally-aligned Brigades: There’s More to This Plan Than Meets The Eye,” *Small Arms Journal*, 19 September 2012, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/regionally-aligned-brigades-theres-more-to-this-plan-than-meets-the-eye> (accessed 28 April 2014).

<sup>6</sup>Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam A History* (New York, NY: The Viking Press, 1983), 137.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>8</sup>Study of the 12-Month Vietnam Tour, June 1974, A-1. The length of involuntary military service was 24 months. After in-processing, completing basic combat training and advanced individual training, the draftee had a little over a year in service left, the remainder of which was used to out-process the Army. The Johnson Administration refused to extend the length of involuntary service.

<sup>9</sup>Morale, under Westmorland, would be a determining and crucial factor to determine unit performance instead of personnel stability and cohesion.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The topic of this thesis is about unit cohesion as it relates to combat effectiveness. Using the Vietnam War as the background for research, the thesis focuses on determining in what manner organizational stability and combat effectiveness (unit cohesion) could have been enhanced by a process of unit deployments/replacements vice the individual replacement of US forces. Much of the material reviewed focuses on personnel turbulence, introduced through personnel policies, career management, and the general nature of warfare. There is considerable information regarding the relationships between group or unit cohesion, the responsibilities of organizations, small-units, and leaders to establishing a cohesive environment, for replacements, and replacement policies. However, much of the literature uses either pre-Vietnam case studies or post-Vietnam surveys to support their findings and conclusions, or uses anecdotal evidence without the support of concrete data. Without first understanding the international, political, and social context of Vietnam, applying any conclusive findings is misrepresentative. As the US Army reduces its force structure, it seeks to leverage relationships by means of regionally aligning forces (division-level) across the globe. This re-alignment is reminiscent of the deployment of initial divisions into Vietnam that maintained, as General Westmorland stated, “staying power” by means of rotating personnel in and out of Vietnam. While there is no certainty that the US Army will maintain a strategy of regionally aligned forces indefinitely, there is an interest to re-learn some of the issues that plagued the Vietnam era Army’s ability to operate and how those lessons can be applied to today’s Army. To determine how organizational stability and combat

effectiveness could be enhanced in Vietnam, literature concerning military cohesion, responsibility for fostering cohesion, and replacement (policies/turbulence) must be reviewed. Historic narrations must also be included among the literature in order to provide context and clarify understanding of certain decisions. The literature review is organized in chronological order and into three categories, cohesion, replacement policies and historical works.

Charles C. Moskos, Jr., author of, *The American Combat Soldier in Vietnam*, conducted a sociological assessment of the attitudes and behaviors of soldiers over the course of the war in Vietnam. Moskos suggests that the American soldier in Vietnam was individualistic in nature, but will place his beliefs and attitudes aside for self-interest. This is a departure from the traditional forge of cohesion (developing relationships over time) that characterized the soldier bonds of World War II. Moskos' article is an expansion into the realm of why men were even next to each other. Moskos notes that the continued breakdown of discipline in Vietnam occurred over three successive periods, 1965-1967, 1968-1969, and 1970-1973. From 1965-1967, soldier morale and cohesion were relatively high. This period overlaps with the initial deployment of entire units. Moskos refers to the period of 1968-1969, as a transitional period with mixed degrees of cohesion and demoralization. This period would have coincided with the arrival of individual replacements (IRs), the transition of some experienced soldiers to similar units, and the departure of the majority of main units. Finally, the period of 1970-1972 notes the widespread breakdown in discipline. Moskos suggests that combat motivation, the will to fight, comes from four fundamental and recurring motivators: support of the populace (national character), effective leadership and discipline, patriotism/a just cause,

and finally the intimacy offered by the small group. In observing and interviewing soldiers from 1965-1967, he concludes, “combat motivation arises out of the linkages between individual self-concern, primary group processes, and the shared beliefs of soldiers.”<sup>1</sup> Moskos’ conclusion suggests that a soldier can expect to receive the same amount of support they themselves provided to the unit. He comments on the societal and political issues (racism, caste system, drug use, anti-war movement, assassinations) that plagued the combat soldier in Vietnam but holds that survival and self-interest overrode these issues. Moskos concludes with, “rather than viewing soldiers’ primary groups as some kind of semimystical bond of comradeship, they can be better understood as pragmatic and situational responses.”<sup>2</sup> Moskos’ views on cohesion may initially appear skewed and departing from traditional thought, but they do not. They still align with the beliefs that soldiers bond through significant and life threatening events. Moskos comments on the personnel policies that created turbulence, perpetuating “an individualistic perspective that was essentially self-concerned.” Unlike World War II, where soldiers had time to develop rapport and build cohesion, the personnel policies of Vietnam created an environment where soldiers contractually developed cohesion out of self-interests.

The premise of *Crisis in Command: Mismanagement in the Army* is that the United States Army is in need of significant reform to improve cohesion. Written by Richard A. Gabriel and Paul S. Savage, the authors support their thesis using operational performance and behavioral data from the Vietnam War. Their argument suggests that the Army failed to maintain unit cohesion from squad to company by instituting destructive policies. They suggest that the high increase in drug use, leader

assassinations, and disobeying of orders were all indicators of discipline issues that the Army, specifically the officer corps, failed to address. They view that the US Army, as it was, could not withstand minimal combat stress because of ethical and behavioral tendencies derived from the officer corps that failed to lead. Their assertion is the officer corps is responsible for the disintegration of units, and by extension, unit cohesion because of the increasingly managerial role the officer took. They indicate that officer career management caused an increase in officer rotations that caused lower quality officers to lead combat units. Furthermore, the use of technology (communications/transportation technologies) allowed officers to manage the unit in combat from safety. Both of these factors socially and physically separated the officer from the soldiers and openly destroyed unit cohesion and morale. The authors also contend that the individual 12-month deployment policy, vice a unit rotation, destroyed the units' ability to create a sense of identity, morale and cohesiveness. Gabriel and Savage also suggest that the issues faced by the Army in Vietnam were a product of the Army's adoption of a corporate model initiated by General George C. Marshall and perpetuated by Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara. The practice of running a good business thus encouraged management, not leadership, to prevail. Under a system of management, unit cohesion translated into combat strength, but combat strength does not necessarily produce or imply cohesion. *Crisis In Command*, offers a unique perspective into the issues associated with social acceptance and operational necessity. It delves deep into the role of the leader who, according to Moskos, is a traditional source of combat motivation. In this regard, it has applicability to today's leadership who are required to balance managerial skills with good leadership. It is critical of the Army's

policies and leadership but it has some interesting points, particularly the manager versus leader content, and the charts that depict issues of discipline from the late 1960s to the early 1970s. While it provides historical context and insight into the policies that seem to plague the Vietnam War, it fails to provide specific examples of unit discipline issues.

*Cohesion: The Human Element in Combat*, is a theoretical study of military sociology and comparative analysis that focuses on the human (soldier) as the most important element in combat. Written by William Darryl Henderson, a Vietnam Veteran, he argues against the prevailing thoughts of why the US fared so poorly in Vietnam; technology, strategy, and leadership. While he acknowledges the roles and importance each plays in warfare, he notes that there are limits to their influence in winning wars. Henderson contends that the small unit is the premier influence on the ground combat soldier's motivation to fight because it is at the crossroads of organization/leader/soldier interaction, and it satisfies the social/support mechanisms of the soldier. To illustrate this point, Henderson, discusses the military performance and will of the North Vietnamese Army against a technologically superior enemy. He identifies how they are able to leverage failures, through nationalist ties and identity (national character) to promulgate cohesion. He sites that the US Army has failed at building cohesive units because the motivation for good social reinforcement exists outside of the Army, thus affecting the soldier's performance inside the Army. Said another way, the soldier's unit, is not the source of support or morale and therefore has no influence over the soldier. However, Henderson warns about the dangers associated with small-group cohesion in that the values, goals and beliefs of the small group, once developed and tested in combat, may not necessarily reflect the values, goals, and beliefs of the large organization.

Henderson's book has applicability to the thesis in that it identifies the functions (or responsibilities) of the organization, small unit, and leaders that characterize cohesion while acknowledging the dangers associated with developing a sub-culture. Additionally, Henderson identifies external factors that could motivate soldiers to act against small-unit cohesion. This book is heavily influenced by Henderson's military service and is forthright regarding the inability of the US Army to develop, with some exceptions, cohesive units.

A chapter within *The New Guard and Reserve*, "Stability and Cohesion: How Much is Needed," written by John D. Winkler reviews the relationship of stability and cohesion in deciding performance. Winkler contends that these relationships are more complex than previously believed, and that the relationships have not been quantified. His work outlines the benefits and challenges of both a unit and individual rotation system. He refers to several case studies concerning cohesion but identifies two problems. First, it is unclear how actual variations in cohesion affect performance and second, the studies are dated. Winkler continues by defining stability and cohesion, and the roles each has regarding performance. Stability is defined as the minimal movement of personnel. Winkler suggests that stability has a greater impact on those units requiring greater technical skills and time to learn, than non technical skills. When referring to cohesion, Winkler approaches the subject from the view of a social scientist who distinguishes between task-based and social-based cohesion. Referring to the works of Mullen and Cooper, task cohesion has more impact on effectiveness than social cohesion, social cohesion can have adverse effects, successful performance predicts cohesion more so than cohesion predicts successful performance, task and social cohesion have different



determinants, cohesion is better identified in smaller groups, and social cohesion preserves group integrity in austere conditions. Winkler does not take a stance on the subject cohesion and stability, but simply suggests “that the strength of evidence does not yet justify the adoption of personnel assignments and rotation policies on the basis of stability and cohesion.”<sup>3</sup>

The *First Air Cavalry Division In Vietnam*, published in 1967, and written by Edward Hymoff, is the official account of the division’s experience with the air assault concept and exploits from 1965-1966. The operational accounts are mostly from the division staff and the commanding general, Major General John Norton, who admits that this is not an all-inclusive account of the division’s troopers. However, the book contains some technical and historical data that provides context. Additionally, a list of operations and units involved will help provide a basis for comparison between the subordinate units (brigade to battalion). There are several pages concerning the Battle of Ia Drang Valley, of which 1<sup>st</sup> Squadron, 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment was involved. These pages provide a look at the leadership’s involvement, which according to Henderson, are a function for successful cohesion, and are the crucial ingredient according to Gabriel and Savage.

*Study of the 12-Month Vietnam Policy* is an official government report conducted by the US Army, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel in 1970. The study had two objectives: to determine the advantages and disadvantages of the 12-month policy, and identify considerations for determining future combat tour lengths. The study provides a broad historical context concerning the development of the 12-month tour as well as a range of other aspects. Of relevance within the 26 appendices are: A- Development of the 12-Month Tour in Vietnam, B- Advantages and Disadvantages of

12-Month Hostile Fire Area Tour, D- Personnel Turbulence, P- Morale, Q- AWOL and Desertion, and S- Re-enlistments. These appendices provide official accounts of the policy and are used to determine downward trends in discipline within the Army. While this report is not unit specific, it does provide Army wide context to several areas that can be used as metrics to determine combat effectiveness and cohesion within the 1st Cavalry Division.

*Anatomy of a Division* is a critical analysis of the 1st Cavalry Division from its activation as an airmobile unit to its departure from Vietnam in 1971. Written by Shelby Statton, *Anatomy of a Division* is an account of the division's operational use of the airmobile concept in Vietnam. Statton demonstrates how the division's air mobility enabled it to execute a variety of operations across Vietnam. The book covers the Battle of Ia Drang in some detail and later missions that the division participated in. However, the book focuses more on the brigade level than on subordinate units. The book offers contextual information, detailed maps, and personnel numbers. It also provides comments from senior leaders and emphasizes the important role of air mobility by the variety of tasks the division was provided. Though the use of the helicopter in Vietnam was not introduced by the 1st Cavalry (the 101st and 173rd were using helicopters to transport soldiers before the arrival of the 1st CAV), the 1st Cavalry was designed to use helicopters in every aspect of combat; reconnaissance, attack, logistics and transport. This may be the sole strength of the book in that it provides 1st Cavalry troopers with a trait that differentiates them from other soldiers in Vietnam. By maintaining a unique quality (airmobile), compounded with the cavalry heritage, troopers may have been less

susceptible to external issues that could affect cohesion. However, without statistical data or measures of effectiveness, this thought is sheer conjecture.

Crucial pieces of historical documentation are the “1st Cavalry Division’s Operational Reports on Lessons Learned” (ORLLs) from 1966, 1968, and 1970. These reports constitute an official and first-hand account of all aspects of the division’s operations. Additionally, they detail the actions of subordinate units (brigade and battalion), and corresponding administrative data that will be used to compare the performance of the same unit over time. By using information such as numbers of awards, replacement numbers, casualties, etc, we can draw conclusions as to the state of morale within that unit and parallels to unit cohesion and combat effectiveness. However, the assumption with this information is that it is correct. The other danger with this information is that it can be misconstrued. James Burns noted in his article, “The Naked Truth of Battle,” published in *American Heritage Magazine*;

The messages, intelligence summaries, field orders, operations orders, and all the other records left huge information gaps in the story of the action; they were often meaningless or misleading on the most vital questions.<sup>4</sup>

Only after reviewing these materials can an informed conclusion about how a unit deployment vice individual rotations would enhance organizational stability (cohesion) and combat effectiveness. The subject of cohesion, those factors that must exist and align to enable an environment conducive to this effect have to be understood. Moskos provides an umbrella of what drives combat motivation (national character, a just war, leadership, the small unit), that Gabriel/Savage and Henderson explore in depth. Moskos believes that cohesion (combat motivation) derives out of the necessity for self-preservation, an agreement of convenience. Gabriel and Savage stalwartly argue that the

lack of leadership caused widespread discipline issues that ultimately led to the breakdown in unit cohesion. Finally, Henderson provides the reader with a checklist of items for which each function (next echelon command, leadership, small-unit) is responsible to set the conditions for and develop cohesion. There are a number of reasons that cohesion may foster or perish. Moskos, Gabriel/Savage, and Henderson provide some of the more popular theories about cohesion. Winkler points out that the relationship between stability, cohesion and effectiveness needs to be explored in greater detail to validate any assumptions. Reinforcing these theories with concrete proof in the form of unit centric and contemporary Vietnam era statistics legitimizes their theories. For instance, Gabriel and Savage provide Army statistics that prove discipline issues existed and escalated over the course of the Vietnam War, but do not provide those numbers in context or for any specific unit. Consider the course of the war, the deployment of units vice individuals, the change in strategy, the unpopularity, the draftee, Vietnamization and the withdrawal. Placed into context, one can easily conclude that discipline issues would of course naturally increase and evolve, especially when the conditions exist to perpetuate them. While leadership is an important factor in building unit cohesion, it is not the sole factor. By reviewing operational materials from the same unit over time, we can extrapolate data that may provide relevant statistical conclusions concerning unit cohesion and the popular theories, thus providing a comparison to aid in future research. As the Army transitions towards smaller, regionally aligned forces that may potentially deploy individuals based on military occupation specialty, it is imperative to understand the effects of such decisions on unit cohesion and combat effectiveness.

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<sup>1</sup>Charles C. Moskos, "The American Combat Soldier in Vietnam," *Journal of Social Issues* 31, no. 4 (1975): 27.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>3</sup>John D. Winkler, "Stability and Cohesion: How Much is Needed?" *The New Guard and Reserve* (2008): 41.

<sup>4</sup>James M. Burns, "The Naked truth of Battle," *American Heritage Magazine* 60, no. 4 (2011).

## CHAPTER 3

### COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The preparation for and consideration of modern warfare are traditionally divided into four broad elements: (1) strategy, (2) weapons and material, (3) technology, and (4) numbers of soldiers. Seldom is there any analysis of the human element.

—William D. Henderson, *Cohesion: The Human Element in Combat*

To this point, we have reviewed a brief history of how the nation became involved in Vietnam, and the policies the Army adopted to meet the personnel demands in Vietnam. In this chapter, we will define cohesion and its relationship to combat effectiveness by utilizing information about the human element. We will do this by comparing the 1st Cavalry Division's Operational Reports-Lessons Learned (ORLL) from 1966, 1968, and 1970. The ORLL years coincide with what Moskos suggest are the three distinct and successive periods that mark the changes of the Army in Vietnam; 1965-1967, 1968-1969, and 1970-1972. These reports provide us with invaluable data and insight regarding the state of the personnel and unit within the reporting period. By comparing the same unit over time, we can determine how combat effectiveness and cohesion were affected from a unit deployment to individual rotations.

There are undoubtedly countless definitions, and interpretations of cohesion. According to Gabriel and Savage, cohesion is, "the presence of a set of conditions which create the expectation that a military unit will attempt to perform its assigned orders and mission irrespective of the situation and its inevitable attendant risks."<sup>1</sup> Henderson refers to cohesion as "the motivation of the individual soldier as part of a group."<sup>2</sup> General E.C. Meyer's (Army Chief of Staff 1979-1983) defines cohesion as

the bonding together of soldiers in such a way as to sustain their will and commitment to each other, the unit, and mission accomplishment, despite combat or mission stress.

Regardless of the definition, the importance behind cohesion is that it enables individuals to achieve a common objective by working together. Cohesion is therefore related to combat effectiveness and performance. Logically speaking, the longer a group of individuals work together, the better their cohesion, and the better their combat effectiveness. For example, consider two groups of soldiers. One group is familiar with executing a task; the second group has been informed of the task but has never worked together. If ordered to execute a task, the new soldiers, properly trained, will be able to execute the task but not as effectively as the seasoned group who has conducted the task numerous times. In his work, Winkler refers to subsets of cohesion that social scientists use and are relevant to this research. Social cohesion refers to the personal and emotional bonds that soldiers develop overtime for one another or the group. Task cohesion refers to the mutual interest's soldiers share in achieving an end state or goal that requires the group to accomplish.

For over a decade, the contemporary Army has trained, deployed, fought, and re-deployed as a unit. Known as the Army Force Generation Process (ARFORGEN), it is the force management process used to ensure the availability of Army forces. Unit performance and personnel stabilization were the measures of effectiveness for combat readiness, and in some degree the 1st Cavalry Division executed portions of the ARFORGEN process in 1964, in particularly modernization, manning adjustments, training and education programs, and unit training. In his book, *The First Air Cavalry Division: Vietnam*, Edward Hymoff recounts the initial training and actions of the First

Cavalry Division (Airmobile) from alert to deployment to Vietnam in 1965. He notes the fielding of new equipment, the execution of individual and unit training that include everything from 13 hour long search and evasion courses to innovative aerial gunnery courses. Manning adjustments were made and “personnel officers...scanned individual military records checking for the length of time each man had to serve...those with 60 days or less were left behind.”<sup>3</sup> While elements of the ARFORGEN process may have existed in other units in varying degrees, the innovation and redesign of the 1st Cavalry Division into the Army’s first airmobile division provided a unique opportunity for the unit to work towards a common goal. Outfitted with new equipment, the unit trained together in order to devise doctrine, procedures, and close working relationships between various military occupation specialties. How would the 1st Cavalry Division’s cohesion and combat effectiveness change over the course of the Vietnam War as it transformed from a unit deployment to an individual deployment? In what manner might organizational stability have enhanced combat effectiveness?

To answer these questions, we will review the 1st Cavalry Division’s Operational Reports-Lessons Learned (ORLL). To ensure a fair representation of the effects of unit cohesion and combat effectiveness from an initial unit deployment to the deployment of individuals, we will review three ORLLs, one from 1966, one from 1968, and one from 1970. The ORLLs offer a number of indications concerning unit cohesion and combat effectiveness. These reports are the means for the unit to communicate issues and best practices within the organization to higher headquarters. If there are issues concerning cohesion, and combat effectiveness, they would appear within these reports. By reviewing data, after action reviews, and lesson learned, from each period, and applying



our understanding of what cohesion is, we will determine how cohesion and combat effectiveness were influenced.

The data reviewed in tables 1 thru 3 is largely administrative but serve as indications concerning the morale, cohesion, and combat effectiveness of the unit. At this point, it should be noted that there is some risk associated with comparing these reports since the methods of data collection are unknown, the standards for data are subject to bias, and the roles of commanding officers vary with personality. For instance, the 1966 ORLL is signed by the division commander, the 1968 ORLL is signed by the division chief of staff, and the 1970 ORLL is signed by the assistant adjutant general. While this example may not fully indicate the commander's involvement in the unit, it is, nonetheless, interesting to note. The data reviewed is categorized into three main areas, Personnel, Maintenance of Discipline/Law and Order, and Operations. Tables 1 through 3 represent information drawn from the ORLLs. Where appropriate, information is presented in several ways; numbers, percentages or echelon equivalents. Figure 1 is the equation for determining the ORLL percentage as it relates to the inputted ORLL numbers contained in tables 1 through 3. Since assigned strengths vary within the reporting period and among the ORLLs, the highest personnel strength will be used per ORLL.

$$\text{ORLL Percentage} = (\text{ORLL Number}) \times 100 / \text{Highest Assigned Personnel Strength}$$

Figure 1. Percentage Formula

*Source:* Created by author.

The ORLL provides numbers regarding the areas of promotion, reenlistment, and extension, but does not provide the number of total personnel eligible within these areas. While a percentage can be determined against the assigned strength, this percentage misrepresents the actual percentage of the eligible population. For example, if 100 personnel in a unit of 1000 are eligible for promotion, then only 10 percent of the organization represents the eligible population. Therefore, when 50 people are promoted, the actual percentage should be 50 percent (considering the eligible population of 100) instead of 5 percent (the population of the unit). Since the eligible population is unknown, we will equate the selected numbers of each area where percentages cannot be determined to echelons for comparison (See figure 2). The ORLLs also provide narratives concerning lessons learned and operational summaries for named operations. Combining the administrative data and narratives will provide us with indications concerning the motivation, cohesion and combat effectiveness of the unit over the three periods.

Personnel	Equivalent Echelon
12	Squad
50	Platoon
200	Company
800	Battalion
2,400	Brigade/Regiment

Figure 2. Echelon Equivalent

*Source:* Created by author.

### 1966 Operational Report-Lessons Learned

The 1 January 1966 thru 30 April 1966 ORLL (See table 1) represents the initial deployment of the 1st Cavalry Division as a whole unit, or a unit comprised of soldiers that had previously worked together. In some cases, these men had worked together as early as 1963 during the experimentation phase of the air mobile concept.<sup>4</sup> The division conducted rigorous training to prepare for its deployment to Vietnam, compounded by the fielding of new equipment, and reorganization. The first indication of leader involvement and a testament of unit integrity came from Major General Harry W. O. Kinnard, Commander of the 1st Cavalry Division from July 1965 to May 1966. A Veteran of World War II, Kinnard opposed Westmorland's initial reaction to split the division and send its three brigades to different parts of Vietnam. Kinnard argued, "the whole point of airmobility . . . was to keep the closely integrated forces together to maximize its impact."<sup>5</sup> Perhaps the premier proof of unit cohesion and combat effectiveness in the 1st Cavalry Division was their conduct during the Pleiku Campaign from October to November 1965. The opening battle of this campaign was the Battle of Ia Drang, renowned for the actions of the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Harold G. Moore. At the conclusion of the month long campaign, the 1st Cavalry Division had,

in a stunning display of airmobility...blunted a major NVA attack...killing a confirmed 1,519 NVA (North Vietnamese Army), wounding an estimated 1,178, and capturing 157.<sup>6</sup>

However, the division also suffered casualties, 304 killed and 524 wounded. For its actions and conduct during the Pleiku Campaign, the division was awarded the

Presidential Unit Citation (PUC). Portions of the excerpt are in quotes to emphasis the requirements of cohesion (*esprit de corps*), and combat effectiveness to earn a PUC.

The PUC is awarded to units of the Armed Forces of the United States and cobelligerent nations for extraordinary heroism in action against an armed enemy occurring on or after 7 December 1941. The unit must display such “gallantry, determination, and *esprit de corps*” in accomplishing its mission under extremely difficult and hazardous conditions as to set it apart from and above other units participating in the same campaign. . . . Only on rare occasions will a unit larger than a battalion qualify for award of this decoration.<sup>7</sup>

There should be no doubt as to the high degree of unit cohesion and combat effectiveness displayed by the 1st Cavalry Division during the 1965 winter campaign. The 12 month rotation policy would not impact the division until the spring of 1966; therefore table 1 depicts information of a unit that has trained, deployed, and fought together.

Table 1. 1966 ORLL

1966 ORLL		
Personnel		
	Start Strength	End Strength
Authorized/Assigned	15,955/16,732	15,955/17,247
Awards Issued	7354	
Promotions	2179	
Reenlistments/Extentions	237/50	
Maintenance of Discipline, Law and Order		
Incidents reported to the Provost Marshal's Office	564	
General Courts Martial	15	
Special Courts Martial	84	
Summary Courts Martial	57	
Inspector General	1	
Operations		
Named operations	8	
Days in the field	>76	
Enemy KIA	1856	
Enemy WIA	1538	
Enemy Captured	667	
Friendly KIA	206	
Friendly WIA	1135	
Friendly MIA	1	

Source: Created by author.

In the area of Personnel, the 1966 ORLL indicates that the division was over strength in personnel, beginning with a 4 percent overage in January and ending with an 8 percent overage in April. In theory, a unit that is over strength in personnel should function at a higher level than a unit with fewer personnel. The ORLL appears to support this theory, “the problem of insufficient personnel to process information to support combat operations has been partially alleviated by the increased personnel authorization.”<sup>8</sup> However, the division recognizes the potential effects of the upcoming August rotation and initiated plans to minimize the impact of the Date of Expected Rotation from Overseas Assignment (DEROs) for some 8,800 personnel. For instance, the division created the Aviator Infusion Program that reassigned 250 aviators with

August DEROs for aviators with later than August DEROs to maintain continuity.

General Kinnard states, “at this time there are no discernible problems that cannot be overcome by meticulous planning and follow through.”<sup>9</sup> There were a total of 7,354 decorations awarded, or 43 percent of the division. A total of 2,179 personnel were promoted. This number represents 13 percent of the division’s strength, or about three battalions. A total of 237 personnel reenlisted, 1 percent of the division’s strength or one company. A total of 50 personnel or .3 percent of the division’s strength extended their tour of duty. This is roughly equivalent to one platoon.

In the area of Maintenance of Discipline/Law and Order, the office of the Provost Martial<sup>10</sup> reported a total number of 564 incidents, or 3.3 percent of the division strength. The 1966 ORLL does not specify the types of incidents reported or locations, but we can assume that the majority of these incidents occurred within fixed base camps. There were a total of 156 courts-martial, 90 percent of which were special court-martial and below.<sup>11</sup> Major General Kinnard notes, “The Division’s low percentage of courts-martial (>1 percent of the division strength) was indicative of the low rate of serious incidents and offenses being committed by members of this command.”<sup>12</sup> The command directed the Inspector General<sup>13</sup> to conduct two investigations, and one inquiry was completed. “No significant trends in complaints and/or requests were revealed.”<sup>14</sup>

In the area of Operations, the unit executed eight named operations that approximate 76 days of field time. Field time is defined as time spent away from a fixed base or camp. Of the 120 days within the reporting period, 63 percent of the period was utilized to conduct combat operations in the field. During the reporting period, the enemy lost (KIA or Captured) the equivalent of 1 brigade. The enemy was degraded (WIA) by

approximately 2 battalions. Friendly losses (KIA or MIA) were equivalent to 1 company, and capability degraded (WIA) by 1.5 battalions.

There are key comments within the 1966 ORLL that suggest the division was seeking to enhance its combat effectiveness through continued development. For instance, the division recommends changes to the Table of Organization and Equipment (TO&E) based on

7 ½ months of airmobile experience against insurgent forces in South Vietnam and were designed (the recommended changes) to advance the mobility and agility of the division on the battlefield.<sup>15</sup>

This recommendation was based on the lack of available mission ready aircraft that required the, “modification of tactical operations, rather than permitting a full range of tactical schemes of maneuver.”<sup>16</sup> Another indication of development is the divisions’ training activities that were outlined in Division Circular 350-44.<sup>17</sup> All of the training programs were focused on enhancing the abilities of current and newly assigned personnel for situations that were relevant to combat operations. For instance, personnel were trained on rappelling and Troop ladders, door gunnery, primary and secondary weapons familiarization, autorotation training, and landing zone preparation fires. Furthermore, the division sought expert training in the forms of mobile training teams, new equipment training teams, and higher echelon training events. The division tested and commented on the use of nine pieces of equipment, and where necessary, developed equipment to enhance combat effectiveness. For example, the Division Support Command fabricated and tested a special sling to airlift a 155mm howitzer from a CH-54 helicopter in support of Operation Masher/White Wing. General Kinnard’s optimistic

comments summarize the division's exceptional operations and training events, and remarks, "a number of firsts were accomplished during the reporting period."

The 1st Cavalry Division of 1966 met all of the requirements outlined in Henderson's book, *Cohesion: The Human Element in Combat*. The division provided purpose and understanding for offensive operations that were no doubt inspired by ideological differences. The division provided support by maintaining at or above personnel strength, delivering all classes of supplies, and implementing new concepts to improve sustainment operations. Although an argument against support could be made concerning the diminished aircraft availability. Lastly, the division reinforced small unit policies through division training. While the training was focused on the individual, the training reinforced and promoted responsibility for the group. The premise of *Crisis in Command: Mismanagement in the Army*, by Gabriel and Savage is that good leadership promotes cohesion and bad leadership destroys cohesion. In 1966, the 1st Cavalry Division Commander was Major General Harry W.O. Kinnard, the man who had confronted Westmorland concerning the value of maintaining the integrity of the division. Additionally, the 3rd Brigade Commander was Colonel Harold G. Moore, the man who had led the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment in the Battle of Ia Drang.

While these gentlemen do not represent all of the 1st Cavalry Division's commanders, we can surmise that the remaining leadership shared the same beliefs and commonality as these men demonstrated. Winkler may indicate that this period represents the best combat effectiveness and balance between social and task cohesion. Additionally, the unit has previous success to draw on, is executing a rigorous training plan to foster social cohesion, and has the available leadership.



### 1968 Operational Report-Lessons Learned

The Tet Offensive began in late January of 1968 and ended towards the end of February. During this time the 1st Cavalry Division had repositioned from the central highlands of II Corps Tactical Zone (CTZ) to the I CTZ, north of Hue. The division would be instrumental in,

three highly successful and tactically significant operations: (1) The Tet Offensive, which saw the 1 ACD (Air Cavalry Division) preventing the seizure of QUANG TRI (province in I CTZ) and assisting in the expulsion of the NVA (North Vietnamese Army) from their foothold in Hue City (Operation Jeb Stuart I); (2) Operation PEGASUS/LAM SON 207A which relieved the NVA pressure on the 26<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment at KHE SANH; and (3) the entirely air-supported Operation DELEWARE/LAM SON 216, which disrupted NVA activities by means of a reconnaissance in force in the A SHAU Valley.<sup>18</sup>

The 1 February thru 30 April 1968 ORLL (table 2) represents what Moskos refers to as a transitional period (1968-1969) with mixed degrees of cohesion and demoralization. This period coincided with the arrival of individual replacements (IRs), the transition of experienced soldiers to similar units, and the departure of the majority of main units. As the conflict in Vietnam continued, units lost experienced personnel with great regularity through personnel policies and battlefield attrition. “The personnel turbulence, caused by loss and gains of individuals, did not cease.”<sup>19</sup> With varying DEROs and degrees of experience in country, the unit, and the Army, how would unit cohesion and combat effectiveness of the 1st Cavalry Division of 1968, compare to that of the 1st Cavalry Division of 1966?

To determine this question, we will reference table 2. Unfortunately, several of the areas that would indicate the level of morale, and unit cohesion are not provided in the report. However, there is still some comparative data that illustrates combat effectiveness. Additionally, the 1968 ORLL provides further detail into some areas that

the 1966 ORLL did not. These areas will be examined to provide additional information concerning the state of morale, cohesion and combat effectiveness.

Table 2. 1968 ORLL

1968 ORLL		
Personnel		
	Start Strength	End Strength
Authorized/Assigned	18234/18136	19472/19181
Awards Issued	No Data Available	
Promotions	No Data Available	
Reenlistments/Extentions	No Data Available	

Maintenance of Discipline, Law and Order		
Incidents reported to the Provost Marshal's Office	183	
General Courts Martial	No Data Available	
Special Courts Martial	No Data Available	
Summary Courts Martial	No Data Available	
Inspector General	No Data Available	

Operations		
Named operations	5	
Days in the field	83	
Enemy KIA	4211	
Enemy WIA	No Data Available	
Enemy Captured	133	
Friendly KIA	311	
Friendly WIA	1962	
Friendly MIA	85	

*Source:* Created by author.

In the area of Personnel, the 1968 ORLL indicates that the division was under strength in personnel, by .5 percent in February and 1.5 percent at the end of April. The differences between authorized and assigned strengths were 102 and 291 personnel respectfully. With fewer personnel available and assuming the operational tempo was not adjusted to account for the reduction of personnel, more of the work load was placed on those personnel available. The G-1 indicates that,

serious shortages continued to exist in Infantry and Armor Captains, Signal Officers, Warrant Officer aviators (especially CH47 qualified), Infantry 11B's and Artillery 13A & B's.<sup>20</sup>

In theory, a unit that is under strength in personnel (especially those in leadership roles) should not function as effectively as one that is at or, beyond authorized strength. The 1968 ORLL identifies two instances where external unit augmentation would facilitate mission effectiveness. The first case is a recommendation for the addition of a fourth line company in the 8<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion to provide general support. The next example is a recommendation for the attachment of military police when mission requirements dictate. While the shortages in personnel were not directly attributed as the causes for requesting augmentation, one can argue that the unit was not operating as effectively as it could have been if it had been at full strength. In the case of the 8<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion, for instance, "general support was obtained by removing some of the direct support available to each committed brigade."<sup>21</sup> While this task organization filled the requirement for general support, it reduced the direct support capability and placed additional strain on fewer personnel. Information concerning awards, promotions and reenlistments data, which may have provided indications about cohesion and unit effectiveness, was not available within this report. However, Major General John J. Tolson, the Commanding General of the 1st Cavalry Division from March 1967-August 1968, made the following notes that may indicate the degree of professional soldier one could expect to promote.

I have complete confidence in our rapid production of NCOs which we must continuously produce here within the Division. These men are smarter than the ones we had in World War II. They are just as gallant and courageous also. The ones that have the talent must be spotted early and must be promoted just as fast as it is possible to do so. They do a tremendous job and respond to the challenge immediately. Continuous checks must be made to see that units are promoting men who are doing the job just as fast as possible. I do not think there should be any great concern of the caliber of NCOs that we have today in Vietnam because

of their youth and brief experience. If they are carefully selected and assisted as much as possible, they will carry the ball. In fact the young soldier that we have in this Division today is the greatest our Army has ever had during my service. There is a wealth of material ready to become competent combat leaders.<sup>22</sup>

In the area of Maintenance of Discipline/Law and Order, the office of the Provost Martial reported a total number of 183 incidents, approximately 1 percent of the division strength. The G-1 indicates, "In March 118 incidents were processed by the Provost Marshal's office indicating a high degree of discipline, law and order throughout the division."<sup>23</sup> While the preponderance of incidents occurred in March, they only account for approximately .6-.7 percent of the assigned division strength. Furthermore, there was only one named operation (Operation Jeb Stuart) that occurred in March compared to February and April. The 1968 ORLL categorizes the 183 incidents into four categories; crimes against persons and property, miscellaneous offenses, military offenses, and traffic violations. Of note, there were more individuals cited under traffic violations (54) than wrongful possession and /or use of marijuana (27).<sup>24</sup> There was no available data concerning the number of courts-martial or the number of inquiries conducted by the office of the inspector general.

In the area of Operations, the unit executed five named operations that approximate 83 days of field time. Of the 90 days within the reporting period, 92 percent of the period was dedicated to combat operations. The average mission available aircraft percentage for the months of February and March were approximately 64 percent<sup>25</sup>. During the reporting period, the enemy lost (KIA or Captured) the equivalent of 1.8 brigades. Friendly losses (KIA or MIA) were approximately 2 companies, and capability degraded (WIA) by about 2.5 battalions.

The 1968 ORLL provides a dense combat summary of the 1st Cavalry Division and demonstrates its considerable versatility in accomplishing a multitude of missions. The demanding operational tempo and task organization (Marine, Airborne, Light Infantry, South Vietnamese Army, and National Police) perpetuated cohesion through a series of successful operations. The actions of the 1st Cavalry Division in the 1968 ORLL indicate a high degree of effectiveness and cohesion.

Despite the impressive performance of the 1st Cavalry Division in 1968, Henderson would suggest that the division was not fulfilling its role of supporting the lower echelons. Mainly, it was failing to provide the requisite personnel strength. Furthermore, he would contribute the low percentage of discipline issues to the smaller units who are responsible for controlling the soldier's behavior. Gabriel and Savage might make an argument concerning the management, not leadership, of the division. Their argument could be based on the encouragement from the division commander to promote within the organization and replace key and experienced personnel with less capable personnel. While the high friendly casualties (comparatively speaking<sup>26</sup>) for this period could indicate a lack of leadership in promoting less experienced personnel, we cannot discount the operational environment and enemy saturation. Lieutenant General Julian J. Ewell, the 9th Infantry Division commander (1968) stated,

During the late 1960's, the "glamour" divisions in Vietnam--The Big Red One, The First Team, and so forth--by osmosis or design--were getting more than their share of topnotch commanders.<sup>27</sup>

From this observation, we can assume that the leadership in the 1st Cavalry Division was of at least some worth to be praised by an external commander. Additionally, Winkler might argue that this unit best reflects task cohesion brought about by the lack of

personnel and austere conditions that required everyone to work towards mission accomplishment. Furthermore, the side-effect of multiple and successful operations was cohesion.

### 1970 Operational Report-Lessons Learned

By late 1968 the 1st Cavalry Division moved to the III CTZ “to thwart a potential Communist threat. The equivalent of a medium-sized U.S. town took wings and landed at the other end of South Vietnam.”<sup>28</sup> The division occupied an area of operation northwest of Saigon, along the Cambodian border. Policy changes from the White House shifted the focus of military operations to the Government of Vietnam in what was called Vietnamization. During the reporting period, “the 1st Cavalry Division conducted a coordinated attack against the COGVN (Communist Government of Vietnam) Base area in the “Fishhook” region of Cambodia”<sup>29</sup> and made contributions to the pacification in several provinces.

While thrusting against enemy positions along the Cambodian border northwest of Saigon, some elements of the division moved further south into IV Corps (CTZ), working with Naval forces in an operation called "Nav-Cav." Thus the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) became the first American division to have fought in all four tactical zones in South Vietnam.<sup>30</sup>

The 1 May thru 31 July 1970 ORLL (table 3) represents what Moskos refers to as the period (1970-1972) of widespread breakdown in discipline. This is easy to believe, especially when we consider the societal and political attitudes that bombarded soldiers and perhaps permeated the ranks. Realistically, the implementation of Vietnamization, compounded by troop withdrawals in 1969, led soldiers to unnecessarily place themselves at risk in hopes of waiting out the war. In *Grunts: The American Combat*

*Soldier in Vietnam*, Kyle Longley provides the first hand perspectives of soldiers in Vietnam. One account from a platoon leader in Vietnam (1968-1969) reads:

we did our duty, but we generally were not very gung-ho. We did what we were told to do in a very conservative manner. That's why the artillery was called in on that sniper: we'd spend ten thousand dollars on artillery rounds before we'd take a chance on losing somebody, and I'll never apologize for that. Maybe that wasn't a very bravado way of doing it, but we did begin to think we were in a kind of holding action. There was very little of the charge-a-hill-at-any-cost mentality...I believe that under different conditions these guys would have been as dedicated and motivated as any this country has ever sent to war.<sup>31</sup>

Furthermore, the 1970 ORLL represents the strength of the 1st Cavalry Division comprised entirely of personnel on an individual 12-month rotation. These soldiers did not have the time in training to forge cohesive bonds with other members of the unit in the way that the 1st Cavalry Division of 1965 did. Nor could they draw on the success of the post-Tet operations, two years prior, to inspire confidence or combat effectiveness. Compounding these issues were Vietnamization, and a scheduled redeployment. Would the individual will to survive long enough override discipline, thus effecting cohesion and combat effectiveness? Would the Cambodian Campaign deliver similar results as the Pleiku Campaign in 1965? To understand how combat effectiveness and unit cohesion were affected, we will review the data provided in table 3 as well as the narrative of the 1970 ORLL.

Table 3. 1970 ORLL

1970 ORLL		
Personnel		
	Start Strength	End Strength
Authorized/Assigned	20,154/20,211	20,126/19,205
Awards Issued	6,303	
Promotions	3,137	
Reenlistments/Extentions	281	

Maintenance of Discipline, Law and Order		
Incidents reported to the Provost Marshal's Office	739	
General Courts Martial	5	
Special Courts Martial	54	
Summary Courts Martial	8	
Inspector General	114	

Operations		
Named operations	1	
Days in the field	>60	
Enemy KIA	2,295	
Enemy WIA	0	
Enemy Captured	13	
Friendly KIA	185	
Friendly WIA	1,310	
Friendly MIA	9	

Source: Created by author.

In the area of Personnel, the division was initially over strength by 57 personnel, or .3 percent. At the end of the reporting period, the division was under strength by 921 personnel, or approximately 5 percent. As noted above, additional personnel enable division operations while a reduction in personnel places the work load on the remaining personnel. There were 6,303 awards issued, this represents less than half of the division, 31.27 percent. In the category of promotions, 3,137 personnel were promoted, the majority of which were E5 and E4. This number equates to a brigade with an additional battalion. The 1970 ORLL provides the eligible population for reenlistment. Of the 368 personnel eligible for reenlistment, 281 personnel reenlisted, or 76.4 percent of the eligible population. The division surpassed its reenlistment quota for the months of May



and June, with less than half for July; 108 percent, 108 percent, and 43.4 percent respectively. The reenlistment of 281 personnel represents the equivalent of a company with two additional platoons. There was no data regarding extensions within the 1970 ORLL.

In the area of Maintenance of Discipline, Law and Order, the Provost Marshal reported 739 incidents or 3.7 percent of the division strength. This is almost equivalent to the size of a battalion. The ORLL notes, “The overall offense rate increased 1 percent over the last reporting period.”<sup>32</sup> Of the four categories; crimes against persons and property, miscellaneous offenses, military offenses, and traffic violations, all but traffic violations increased from the previous reporting period.<sup>33</sup> The preponderance of incidents were in crimes against persons and property, with charges of murder, manslaughter, aggravated assault, simple assault, robbery, burglary, and larceny (not exceeding \$50.00). The second highest category was military offenses with violations ranging from Absent Without Leave (AWOL), to curfew violations, and the unlawful discharge of a firearm. Traffic violations mark the third highest incidents, and miscellaneous offenses are the lowest reported incident. Of note in the miscellaneous category, 97 incidents are drug related. There were 67 courts-martial conducted in the 90 day reporting period. Of the 67, approximately 93 percent were convened as special courts-martial or below. There were 114 Inspector General Activities conducted, of note are the 109 complaints or requests for assistance, and 5 investigations. No further detail is provided concerning trends or results of the investigations.

In the area of Operations, the unit executed one named operation that was conducted for approximately 60 days in the field. Of the 90 days within the reporting

period, 67 percent of the period was utilized to conduct combat operations inside of Cambodia. During the reporting period, the enemy lost (KIA or Captured) about 1 brigade. The 1970 ORLL did not indicate the number of enemy wounded in action (WIA). Friendly losses (KIA or MIA) were equivalent to 1 company, and capability degraded (WIA) by 1.6 battalions.

While the comments throughout the 1970 ORLL are reminiscent of the 1966 ORLL in terms of training, and fielding equipment, there are indications that suggest the organization lacks experience and training. For instance, an evaluation notes that there are, “a lack of experienced E7’s to fill the position of Platoon Sergeant...much can be gained by having experienced E7’s to help our men in battle.”<sup>34</sup> There are also indications that discipline and enforcing standards are an issue. For instance, untrained personnel were operating new items of equipment, “[resulting] in injuries and excessive equipment damage”.<sup>35</sup> There are also a number of observations that indicate a lack of situational understanding and information sharing, especially in areas that seem intuitive to military operations. For example, intelligence overlays do not adequately display reference marks, the use of a headset to communicate with the aircrew, the reports of ground to air fire are not reported, ground troops exhaust magazines by suppressing the landing zone prior to exiting the aircraft, and the emplacement of defensive wire has to be reiterated. While many of these lessons seem intuitive and previously exercised throughout the division’s history, they may indicate an adverse effect of the individual personnel rotation policy. Despite these issues, the division continued some development and innovation to increase combat effectiveness and cohesion. The division sponsored a 4-day individual replacement training course, a 10-day Combat Leaders Course that

incorporates air assaults, map reading, communications, and leadership, and a sniper course. The division also leveraged USARV (United States Army Vietnam) schools that focused on aviation refresher and transitions. In all, the division opened and closed 48 Fire Support Bases (FSBs) in support of operations in Cambodia. This provided leaders with additional innovations and opportunities to improve effectiveness within the organization and the ARVN. Some innovations included the use of tactical antennas and communication towers that could be air-transported from one FSB to another and co-locating ARVN and US liaisons to facilitate operations. Recommendations to unit standard operating procedures and reporting were also recommended within the 1970 ORLL to improve division effectiveness.

The high numbers of incidents reported to the Provost Marshal are in line with Mosko's time periods and may indicate issues within the division's ability to build cohesive teams. Henderson identifies the organization's (division) role in developing cohesion as establishing goals, provide support, and establish small-unit policies. The 1970 ORLL indicates that there was no focus beyond the Cambodian Incursion and could suggest a failure of establishing goals post Cambodia. To confirm this however, data concerning the incidents reported to the Provost Marshal by date would have to be reviewed to identify if incidents occurred before or after the Cambodian mission. This data is currently unavailable within the 1970 ORLL. As indicated above, many lessons that seem inherent to airmobile and basic military operations seem to have been lost and re-addressed within the 1970 ORLL. This too could indicate a failure on the organization's role for establishing small-unit policies in the form of standard operating procedures (SOPs) prior to this ORLL. However, this lack of continuity and knowledge

may be a direct result of the personnel policies and 1970s soldier. Winkler might argue that the 1st Cavalry Division of 1970 was a blend of task and social cohesion which may account for the high levels of discipline issues and operational effectiveness. The Cambodian Incursion provided the 1st Cavalry Division with direction and focus that enabled task cohesion and combat effectiveness, thus cohesion came out of the successful operation.

### Data Analysis

The comparative analysis is separated into the areas of Personnel, Maintenance of Discipline and Law and Order, and Operations. An analysis by area and category per year will provide the necessary data and indicate unit cohesion and combat effectiveness by type of organization; unit, mixed unit and replacements, and replacements. The side-by-side comparison (See table-4) indicates the data collected from the ORLLs and serves as a quick reference for the reader. Note that the 1966 column represents the deployment of a unit, the 1968 column represents a mixed unit, and the 1970 column represents a unit comprised of individual replacements. At the end of this section, the periods will be weighed to determine which period and type of unit is more conducive to cohesion and combat effectiveness (see table-6).

Table 4. ORLL Comparision

ORLL Side-by-side						
Personnel	1966		1968		1970	
	Start Strength	End Strength	Start Strength	End Strength	Start Strength	End Strength
Authorized/Assigned	15,955/16,732	15,955/17,247	18,234/18,136	19,472/19,181	20,154/20,211	20,126/19,205
Awards Issued	7354		No Data Available		6303	
Promotions	2179		No Data Available		3137	
Reenlistments/Extentions	237/50		No Data Available		281	

  

Maintenance of Discipline, Law and Order	1966	1968	1970
Incidents reported to the Provost Marshal's Office	564	183	739
General Courts Martial	15	No Data Available	5
Special Courts Martial	84	No Data Available	54
Summary Courts Martial	57	No Data Available	8
Inspector General	1	No Data Available	114

  

Operations	1966	1968	1970
Named operations	8	5	1
Days in the field	>76	83	>60
Enemy KIA/	1856	4211	2295
Enemy WIA	1538	No Data Available	0
Enemy Captured	667	133	13
Friendly KIA	206	311	185
Friendly WIA	1135	1962	1310
Friendly MIA	1	85	9

*Source:* Created by author.

In the area of Personnel, the 1966 1st Cavalry Division indicates the best chances for the highest unit cohesion and combat effectiveness. The unit was over strength in personnel, indicating the ability to operate more effectively by having all authorized positions filled, and additional personnel to rapidly transition into authorized billets. In theory, additional personnel should reduce the workload per soldier and result in a better rested and functional unit. However, too man personnel can dilute the organizations' exclusiveness resulting in mediocrity. In this instance, the 1966 1st Cavalry, while over strength, has the smallest personnel strength. In the area of awards, Napoleon Bonaparte said it best, "a soldier will fight long and hard for a bit of ribbon." Assuming that awards were presented with the strictest criteria, 43 percent of the formation was duly committed and recognized for their actions. Not only does this indicate a high level of cohesion, but

also morale. The fact that promotions and reenlistments are lower, compared to 1970, is of marginal consequence. There is only a 3 percent difference between the promotion percentages of 1966 and 1970 of total division strength. Promotions lead to an increase in individual morale, but could potentially affect unit cohesion and combat effectiveness by straining relationships. Consider a newly promoted Sergeant, who has to redefine relationships with previous acquaintances that are now subordinates. Or the Sergeant detracts from combat effectiveness by filling a position and executing duties they are unaccustomed with. The eligible population for reenlistments and extensions is unknown in 1966, versus 1970. However, the total number of reenlistments and extensions for 1966 are only slightly higher than 1970. The fact that there are personnel reenlisting and extending at the beginning of the war is a testament to the units' cohesion.

In the area of Maintenance of Discipline, and Law and Order, the 1968 1st Cavalry Division indicates the best chances for the highest combat effectiveness and unit cohesion. Of the cohort, 1968 represents the fewest incidents reported to the provost marshal (183). This can be attributed to several reasons. First the unit had fewer personnel than authorized, second enemy activity (the Tet Offensive) necessitated a high operational tempo, and finally the unit capitalized on the success in the field to maintain cohesion and discipline. Simply stated, the men of the 1968 1st Cavalry Division did not have the time to get into trouble and the relationships they had forged in battle precluded them from acting against the pressure of group.

There are several ways to interpret the data provided in the area of Operations to determine which period offered the better chances for combat effectiveness. Table 5 provides a summary of the Operations data within the context of this paragraph. The

length of the 1966 reporting period (120 days) must be taken into consideration when comparing the results of the 1966 operations against the 1968 and 1970 reporting periods (90 days). For instance, the 1966 1st Cavalry Division executed 8 named operations in the 120 day reporting period. While this is the highest of the three periods, we can estimate that the 1968 1st Cavalry Division would have executed about 7 named operations in 120 days and the 1970 1st Cavalry Division would have completed 2 named operations (see figure 3). In terms of field time, the 1968 1st Cavalry Division had the greatest percentage and ratio of exposure to the enemy in the field, at 1:12. The 1966 and 1970 periods were approximately 1:2 (see table 5). There are two approaches to this information. First, in order to be combat effective, you have to be exposed to the enemy, and second, in order to be combat effective, you have to be rested and have an opportunity for resupply. There is no doubt that the 1st Cavalry Division in 1966, 1968, and 1970 engaged the enemy, but each did so to varying degrees. For instance, the 1968 1st Cavalry Division had the longest exposure time (92 percent) to the enemy but the shortest rest period. The 1966 and 1970 years had similar enemy exposure percentages and rest period ratios. In the area of casualties, the ratio of friendly losses (KIA and MIA) and enemy losses (KIA and captured) are similar with a ratio of about 1:12 for the 1966 and 1970 periods. Translated into echelons, the loss of a friendly company will result in the loss of an enemy brigade. Note that the ratio for 1968 is slightly smaller, at 1:11. In the case of the 1968 1st Cavalry Division, the loss of two friendly companies resulted in the loss of 1.8 enemy brigades. This may indicate an adverse effect of the prolonged enemy exposure. From a strictly friendly and enemy KIA perspective, the ratios are drastically different (see table 5) and suggest that the 1968 1st Cavalry Division has

better combat effectiveness. Information for friendly and enemy WIAs could not be translated into a ratio because of missing information from the 1968 and 1970 ORLLs. Other factors that must be considered when determining combat effectiveness are enemy disposition, terrain, operational restrictions (observing international boundaries), application of technology, and environment.

After reviewing the Operations data, the 1970 1st Cavalry Division has the highest potential for combat effectiveness. The loss ratio (1:12) is better than the 1968 ratio (1:11) but the same as the 1966 period. The KIA ratio (1:12) is higher than the 1966 ratio (1:9) and only slightly less than 1968 1st Cavalry Division ratio (1:14). With a 1:2 exposure ratio, the 1970 1st Cavalry Division is better supplied and rested to fight than the 1:12 exposure ratio of the 1968 1st Cavalry Division.

$$90/\text{Named Operations} = \text{Estimated Operational Length}$$

$$120/\text{Estimated Operational Length} = \text{Estimated number of missions in 120 days}$$

Figure 3. Operational Lengths Formula

*Source:* Created by author.



Table 5. ORLL Comparative Analysis

ORLL Comparative Analysis			
Operations	1966	1968	1970
Ratio of Days out and in the field	1:1.7 (63%)	1:12 (92%)	1:2 (67%)
Friendly/Enemy Losses**	1:12	1:11	1:12
Friendly/Enemy KIA***	1:9	1:14	1:12
Friendly/Enemy Wounded	1:1.4	Inconclusive	Inconclusive
+ Unit was over strength - Unit was under strength * Combined reenlistment and extension numbers ** Combines friendly KIA and MIA, and enemy KIA and captured *** Friendly and Enemy KIA only			

Source: Created by author.

<sup>1</sup>Richard A. Gabriel and Paul L. Savage, *Crisis in Command: Mismanagement in the Army* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang 1978), 31-32.

<sup>2</sup>William D. Henderson, *Cohesion, The Human element in Combat: Leadership and Societal Influence in the Armies of the Soviet Union, the United States, North Vietnam, and Israel* (Washington, DC: National Defense Press University Press, 1985), 4.

<sup>3</sup>Edward Hymoff, *The First Air Cavalry Division, Vietnam* (New York, NY: M. W. Lads, 1967), 8.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 3

<sup>5</sup>John Pimlott, *Vietnam, The Decisive Battles* (New York, NY: Macmillan 1990), 48.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 59.

<sup>7</sup>Army Regulation 600-8-22.

<sup>8</sup>United States Army, ORLL 1966, 13.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 57

<sup>10</sup>Officer in the unit responsible for the military police, and public safety

<sup>11</sup>There are three forms of courts-martial; summary, special, and general. The nature of the offense characterizes the form of court martial. Summary courts-martial are considered misdemeanor crimes, while special courts-martial are considered felonies.

The degree of sentencing and punishment also increase from summary courts-martial to general courts-martial.

<sup>12</sup>United States Army, ORLL 1966, 10.

<sup>13</sup>Army Regulation 20-1 defines the role of the office of the inspector general as, “inquire into, and periodically report on, the discipline, efficiency, economy, morale, training and readiness.”

<sup>14</sup>United States Army, ORLL 1966, 10.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>18</sup>United States Army, ORLL 1968, 4.

<sup>19</sup>United States Army, Study of the 12-Month Vietnam Tour, June 1974, 4.

<sup>20</sup>United States Army, ORLL 1968, 38.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>22</sup>John J. Tolson, *Airmobility, 1961-1971* (Washington, DC: Dept. of the Army 1973), 201.

<sup>23</sup>United States Army, ORLL 1968, 38.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>25</sup>Percentage based on variants of the Utility Helicopter (UH) only for the months of February and March. Data for April was not available.

<sup>26</sup>According to the National Archives, 1968 was the height of US casualties in Vietnam, a total of 16,899.

<sup>27</sup>Julian J. Ewell, “High Morale in Combat,” *Military Review* 62, no. 6 (June 1982): 22.

<sup>28</sup>*Tour 365*. US Army Publication, USARV (winter 1969): 9

<sup>29</sup>United States Army, ORLL 1970, 1.

<sup>30</sup>*Tour 365*, 9.

<sup>31</sup>Kyle Longley, *Grunts: The American Combat Soldier in Vietnam* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2008), 138-139.

<sup>32</sup>United States Army, ORLL 1970. 1 of Tab L.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 1 of Tab L.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

It is not surprising that the data is inconclusive with identifying a single period or unit type that satisfies cohesion and combat effectiveness in all three areas. The evolution of the Vietnam War from 1965 to 1972 was defined by a number of factors that influenced every aspect of the war. These influences (politics, strategy, attitudes, psychology, and enemy) set the conditions for such a different war to exist in all three periods that placed a disproportionate amount of emphasis in any one of the areas at any given time. Consider the initial deployment of the 1st Cavalry Division in 1965 (including 1966, as this was generally the same unit) for instance. In this initial show of military force and ideological strength, the United States could not afford to undermine this premier unit comprised of professional soldiers that were deployed to free the South Vietnamese people from communist aggression. In 1968 the 1st Cavalry Division's operational tempo during and after Tet was so high that soldiers had fewer days in the rear and even less time to get into trouble. In 1970, the Nixon Administration expanded the war into Cambodia and provided the 1st Cavalry Division with a focus and ability to fight in a conventional manner. So in each case, external influences enabled more progression in a particular area than other areas.

However, there are still indications that may prove a unit type or period was better suited to reflect high cohesion and combat effectiveness. Table 6 illustrates the periods (1966, 1968 and 1970) and areas (Personnel, Discipline, Operations) to be weighed. In the previous chapter, we identified the periods and their best area, table 6 represents those findings with the number 1. The second and third areas for successful cohesion and

combat effectiveness are indicated by the numbers 2 and 3. For example, in the area of Discipline, the 1968 1st Cavalry Division indicates the best chances for the highest combat effectiveness and unit cohesion. Of the three year groups, it has the least success for cohesion and combat effectiveness in the areas of Personnel and Operations.

Table 6. Unit Ratings

Area	1966	1968	1970
Personnel	1	3	2
Discipline	2	1	3
Operations	2	3	1

*Source:* Created by author.

Table 6 illustrates that the 1966 period, a period that represents the initial deployment of a unit, has the overall best ranking and chances of the three year groups conducive to providing cohesion and combat effectiveness. Therefore, a unit deployment vice a system of individual rotations would enhance cohesion and combat effectiveness in the areas of personnel, discipline, and operations. A unit deployment would ensure that personnel levels are at or above authorized strength. Additional people help shoulder the workload therefore enabling morale, cohesion and combat effectiveness. As indicated, the 1st Cavalry Division of 1966 had fewer incidents reported to the provost marshal than the 1st Cavalry Division of 1970. This can be attributed to the peer and social expectations brought about by relationships that have been formed in training. A similar

effect exists in the 1968 1st Cavalry Division, but the operational tempo and lack of personnel mandated compliance. Finally, a unit deployment would enhance operations by having a foundation of understanding and expectations previously instilled within the formation. The 1970 1st Cavalry Division had great success in the area of operations, not because they had a foundation of understanding and expectations, but rather because of the clear and present tactical objective. The fact that the 1966 1st Cavalry Division does not occupy a third place position within table 6 is a clear representation that a unit deployment is, at times, better than a system of individual replacements.

While there are numerous firsthand accounts concerning the detrimental effects of the individual rotation on unit cohesion and combat effectiveness, the data reviewed indicates that there were instances when cohesion and combat effectiveness were better, within the 1st Cavalry Division in Vietnam, under a system of individual rotations vice a unit deployment. This could be attributed to the unique and exclusive organization of the 1st Cavalry Division. The high operational tempo and units' successful reputation across Vietnam provided the men of the 1st Cavalry Division with bravado reminiscent of the Plains Cavalry of the mid to late 19th century. An article in *Military Review*, written by LTG Julian J. Ewell (9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Commander) refers to the 1st Cavalry as a "glamour" division.<sup>1</sup>

There are areas within this research that warrant further study. The primary assumption, stated at the beginning of this chapter, was the uniformity of commanders and staffs to report information correctly and without bias. Supporting documentation, such as the higher headquarters reporting requirements, or subordinate after action reports, would provide legitimacy to the reported data. Secondly, no historic interviews

were conducted to corroborate the level of cohesion and combat effectiveness from soldiers that served with the 1st Cavalry Division in 1966, 1968 or 1970. Additionally, utilizing such an elite organization, such as the 1st Cavalry Division, might in of itself be an anomaly within Vietnam. Future researchers should endeavor to compare other division or subordinate units that maintained the same battle space in Vietnam.

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<sup>1</sup>Julian J. Ewell, "High Morale in Combat," *Military Review* 62, no. 6 (June 1982): 22.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The purpose of this research was to determine and understand in what ways organizational stability and combat effectiveness may have been enhanced by a process of unit deployment and replacement vice individual replacement. Specifically, in what manner was unit cohesion affected by a constant flux of personnel at the soldier and leader levels. In order to develop a solution, we had to first understand if a unit deployment offered better combat effectiveness and cohesion than a unit comprised of individual replacements. The 1st Cavalry Division Operational Reports- Lessons Learned provided the framework and data to measure combat effectiveness and cohesion from the same unit within three distinct periods. After comparing the data, we concluded that a unit deployment set the best conditions to develop cohesion and increase combat effectiveness. Therefore, cohesion and combat effectiveness may have been enhanced in other, later, units by maintaining similar conditions as the 1st Cavalry Division of 1966.

In researching this thesis, I felt it was important to understand the political and administrative context surrounding the Vietnam War. While history may not repeat, it certainly rhymes, and there are some interesting parallels between the post war armies of Vietnam and today. The history of how Vietnam became an American war was enlightening with regards to the politics, strategies and support. *Dereliction of Duty*, by H. R. McMasters, paints an ominous picture concerning the senior leadership's failure to provide the necessary support to the military. Perhaps the best example of this was the decision by the Johnson Administration to not mobilize the reserve forces. Faced with the prospect of a limited and political war the Army leadership pursued personnel policies as



the means to an end. Simply stated, they had to succeed with what was provided and in doing so developed personnel policies that seemed detrimental and contrary to fostering cohesion and combat effectiveness. It is within this context that Gabriel and Savage make their case against managers and leaders.

It was also important to understand the ideas behind cohesion and effectiveness. Mosko introduced the idea that cohesion is a practical contract that ensures personal interests. It is difficult to understand this concept that we so easily apply in our personal lives within a military environment. His concept seems to be contrary to what the military deems important, the unit or group. However, we only need to look at the enforcement of discipline within the Army, the Uniformed Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), to understand that the Army hopes for commitment, but really only seeks compliance. Although one could argue that commitment is weighed in evaluations, awards, and responsibility. Gabriel and Savage identify leadership as the limiting factor in achieving cohesion. They take the stand that technology, self-interests and disproportionate tours of duty perpetuated an environment better suited for managers instead of leaders. Henderson introduces the idea that there are multiple levels of responsibility for cohesion and effectiveness to foster and that a lack in one area can affect development in other areas. Finally, Winkler approaches cohesion from the perspective of the social scientist and provides the sub components of task and social cohesion. Additionally, Winkler introduces the idea that too much emphasis is placed on cohesion and stability as the determining factors for combat effectiveness.

With these concepts of cohesion and effectiveness I sought to logically determine the effectiveness and cohesion of the 1st Cavalry Division in 1966, 1968, and 1970. I

fully expected to find data to support the countless first hand reports concerning the detriments of unit cohesion, and to a degree there was evidence that individual rotations influenced combat effectiveness. Though, there was also data to suggest that units comprised of soldiers with individual rotations excelled based on external factors and the operational environment. However, the analysis indicates that the overall best conditions for combat effectiveness and cohesion were from the 1st Cavalry Division of 1966, a period that represents a unit deployment. Perhaps much of the success owed to the 1st Cavalry Division of 1966, 1968, and 1970 was the continued professional development and training of its soldiers, the operational tempo, and the leadership. Instead of focusing on those external influences that could not be changed, the 1st Cavalry Division focused on changing those things it could change.

If the Army seeks to avoid the operational issues of Vietnam brought about by personnel policies, then it should continue to focus on unit deployments. The deployment of an entire unit is ideal, as was proved in Iraq and Afghanistan, to ensuring combat effectiveness and cohesion. However, it is too costly and has detrimental effects of its own. As the Army transitions to a smaller force, and adopts a concept of regional alignment, individual rotations will become a widely adopted and sustainable practice to ensure the right skills and people are at the right place. While I doubt that the Army will deploy individual soldiers on the scales approaching Vietnam levels, it is a possibility. To ensure their success and avoid the issues faced by many soldiers in Vietnam, the Army must ensure these soldiers receive proper receptions, are afforded training opportunities to foster cohesion, integrate into the unit, and have the right leadership.

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